

The North Fork Weed Cooperative: An Historical Overview

Mission

To work cooperatively on long term basis with willing community members to steward native plant and animal communities throughout the North Fork of the Poudre watershed.

To maximize integrated weed management efforts by coordinating management across both private and public lands, prioritizing resources and strategies, and promoting best management practices.

To disseminate information and knowledge about integrated weed management and ecological restoration that supports successful land stewardship.

To create a community-led model of cooperative stewardship that can be exported to other sites

To manage – control the spread and reduce as much as possible – noxious weeds in the watershed of the North Fork of the Cache la Poudre River through cooperative efforts of private landowners and public land managers.

Scope

The North Fork of the Cache la Poudre River watershed boundaries extend to the north across the Wyoming border, the eastern border roughly along 287, the southern border roughly along 74E (Red Feather Lakes Road)

Total number of acres: 385,000

Founding Community Members

The Nature Conservancy, North Poudre Irrigation Company, Colorado Division of Wildlife, U.S. Forest Service, Landowners Association for Phantom Canyon Ranches, and several private ranches and other private property owners

Initial Funding Sources

The Nature Conservancy: \$28,000

Landowners Association for Phantom Canyon Ranches: \$28,000

RJ/KOSE grant: \$25,000

State of Colorado Division of Wildlife: \$25,000

National Fish & Wildlife Foundation: \$25,000

Colorado Department of Agriculture: \$25,000

Stryker Short Foundation: \$5,000

North Poudre Irrigation Company \$1,500

In-Kind Contributions

The Nature Conservancy provides free office space at it's Laramie Foothills Project Office, 1235 Cherokee Park Road, Livermore CO 80536, as well as other office support services, including phone, copy machine, and the first computer.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): Cooperating framework for a Cooperative Integrated Weed Management Program

Purpose:

The MOU is an agreement among the parties to work cooperatively and strategically under the framework of the NFWC to apply integrated weed management and demonstrate methods to effectively manage weeds on lands owned and/or managed by the Parties located in the North Fork of the Cache la Poudre Watershed.

Initial MOU: 2000 – 2003

Original participants: The Nature Conservancy, Colorado Division of Wildlife, Landowners Association for Phantom Canyon Ranches, and North Poudre Irrigation Company

Current MOU: 2005 -2010

Current Participants:

Private Organizations (3): *The Nature Conservancy, North Poudre Irrigation Company, Legacy Land Trust*

Governmental Organizations (5): *City of Fort Collins, Larimer County Parks and Open Space, Colorado Division of Wildlife, State Land Board, USFS-Canyon Lakes Ranger District*

Property Owners Associations (4): *Fox Acres, Landowners Association for Phantom Canyon Ranches, Meadow Brook Ranch Road Association, Meadow Creek Association*

Ongoing NFWC Activities

Annual membership meeting and potluck in January/February

Newsletters: typically Fall

Flyer-spring events listing

Mapping of weeds in the watershed (by interns)

Methods workshop

Field tours: 7 conducted 1999, 2000, 2001;

Management Plan Writing workshops

Weed removal activities, manual and herbicide

Demonstration projects

Key Dates and Annual Accomplishments

1998

Spring 1998 landowners in the Livermore area hold a meeting to determine common interest in improving control of invasive weeds on private and public lands in the North Fork Poudre River watershed.

Oct. 1998 The Nature Conservancy's Phantom Canyon Preserve representative, Heather Knight, and the Colorado Division of Wildlife, Dave Clarkson, host a meeting in Ft. Collins to determine interest among state and local agencies, private organizations and individuals to create an organization to address the invasive weed problem across boundaries in the watershed.

1999

Summer 1999 a follow up meeting is held at the Livermore Community Hall with twenty people attending to further assess interest in creating an organization.

Fall 1999 the group develops a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) allowing the Colorado Division of Wildlife to apply for funding to support the newly formed organization. A grant of \$15,000 is awarded to begin July 2000 matched by funds from other participants; to start mapping weeds across boundaries and developing weed management plans.

October 1999 meeting participants discuss initial experiences with weed management, 40,000 acres represented; goal-oriented action plan is developed.

2000

Weed Coordinator, Dirk Baker, hired @ 60% time year round
Interns - 3: one full time for 3 months, one part time for 3 months, one full for 1 month
Established mapping protocol
Mapped Phantom Canyon Ranches roads and CDOW Cherokee Park Units within 100 meters
Mapped Meadow Creek, Andrews Park & part of Phantom Canyon Preserve
Contracted for herbicide application along roadsides
Plan for the year also included mapping private lands such as North Poudre Irrigation Company, Glade Ranch, Abbey of St. Walburga, Swanson, Knight, Quan
Held Management Plan Workshops (4), Methods workshops (4), Site tours (4) and started to produce Best Practices Notebooks
TNC provided free office space and computer

2001

Weed coordinator @ 80%, plus 2 interns full time for 5 months
Formed a five member council: Mike Sherman (CDOW), Steve Smith (Irrigation Company), Heather Knight (TNC), Reid Cameron (LAPCR), Kathy Orloski Fithian (private landowner).
Revised mapping protocol
20,000 acres mapped to date including Landowners of Phantom Canon Ranches, CDOW Lower & Middle Cherokee Park, TNC land
Management plans developed: 19
Purchased 9 GPS units @ \$150 each
Library and equipment for loan to members
Web site developed by Kathy Schroedl www.northforkweedcoop.org.

2002

U.S. Forest Service, Vernon La Fontaine joins Council as non-voting member.
Start Native Seed Cost Share program
100,000 + acres participating in weed management
35,000 + acres mapped for weed infestations
Contractor mapping: Roberts (3400), Seidel (1820), Peterson (1215)
TNC/NFWC: Antelope Canon (225), Canyon Common Lands (200 north of Halligan Reservoir)
20,000 + acres treated with integrated methods by Coop efforts (not including efforts of individual owners)
Developed color brochure describing Coop; 1,000 mailed to homeowners in watershed.
Produced 14 Best Management Practices informational handouts – Canada thistle, musk thistle, bull thistle, scotch thistle, plumeless thistle, houndstongue, hoary cress, common mullein, Dalmatian and yellow toadflax, leafy spurge, diffuse knapweed, Russian knapweed, spotted knapweed, and downy brome.
Developed the idea of Demonstration Projects to exemplify and test methods of integrated weed management for different noxious weed species and methods.
Riparian restoration project -- Seidel's East Rabbit Creek Ranch (project begun in 2000 as a collaborative effort supported by The Nature Conservancy (TNC), the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Colorado State University (CSU), Livermore Elementary School)-adopted as ad demonstration project for the Coop
Weed Coordinator Dirk Barker leaves to become a doctoral student at CSU.
Membership is 31 paid: four agency and 27 individuals.
First hosted annual membership meeting and potluck

2003

Constitution and Bylaws adopted

Completed requirements to be a non-profit tax-exempt 501C(3) organization

Formal creation of Council- 6 volunteers representing private and public membership

Demonstrations projects-continue Rabbit Creek project and adopted 4 new projects-

Spring Development – Antelope Canyon (begun in 2002 with assistance from the NCRS and other volunteers)

Dalmatian toadflax/grazing project.-- Robert's Ranch

Cheat grass herbicide treatment -- Phantom Canyon Preserve and TJ Mac

Leafy spurge – Landowners of Phantom Canyon Ranches, Andrews Park

Continued offering tours, methods and weed management plan workshops.

Native Seed Cost Share Program continues

Weed coop less reliant on The Nature Conservancy and starts to shape its work as a cooperative community led organization-TNC transfers funding to Coop to administer

Focus of the Coop is education and outreach

Library and equipment for loan to members

Membership is 34 paid: five associations, five agency/organizations, 26 individuals.

Started database to track weed coop membership and management.

2004

New demonstration project: Livermore Fire Stations #1 & #2: control of Dalmatian toadflax, cheat grass, Kochia & field bindweed (#1); native seed planting (#2), funded by Larimer County Small Grants Program for two years.

Began discussions with Poudre River Ranch about a public-private project for that part of the watershed.

Began work on a new MOU to expand the membership and replace the MOU which established the organization.

Glacier View Meadows Homeowners Association, Ecology Committee establishes a subcommittee headed by Judd Adams to develop a noxious weed management plan for the association.

Habitat Partnership Program (HPP) creates cost share weed treatment program-partnership between HPP and Larimer County to provide cost share on chemicals and weed treatments in the watershed for 3 years-focusing first along Lone Pine drainage

Continued offering tours, methods and weed management plan workshops.

Native Seed Cost Share Program continues

Continued offering tours, methods and weed management plan workshops.

Library and equipment for loan to members

Membership is 29 paid: three associations, five agency/organizations, 21 individuals.

2005

*Initiated **Wacky Weeders**, a ½ day noxious weed removal project on US Forest Service Lands in the Red Feather Lakes area, 22 people participated; organized by Linda Bell and Bill Gilbert-partnership between private landowners, USFS, TNC and NFWC*

Continued Demonstration Projects-due to weather extension granted to Larimer County Small grant for Livermore Fire Station projects

GVM Ecology committee conducts a methods workshop for its members who then do a weed survey of the approximately ½ the 56 miles of Association roads and provide data to county for herbicide spraying; methods workshop offered to community members in the summer.

Adopted new MOU with expanded community participation-12 entities signed on

*Continued offering tours, methods and weed management plan workshops.
Native Seed Cost Share Program continues
HPP weed treatment cost share continues and expands in watershed
Continued offering tours, methods and weed management plan workshops.
Library and equipment for loan to members
Membership is 20 paid: six agency/organizations and 14 individuals.*

2006

*Continued Demonstration Projects-complete Larimer County Small Grant requirements for Livermore Fire Station projects
GVM Ecology committee continues efforts and expands work with Larimer County Small Grant
Continued offering tours, methods and weed management plan workshops.
Native Seed Cost Share Program continues
HPP weed treatment cost share continues in watershed
Continued offering tours, methods and weed management plan workshops
Some of founding Council members end their terms
Membership is 44 paid: nine agency/organizations and 35 individuals.*

2007

*Engage next landowners association-Bonner Peak
Continued existing Demonstration Projects and adopted new demonstration project with Abbey of St. Walburga-including work days, sites tours, management plan development, cost share of weed treatments
GVM Ecology committee continues efforts
Continued offering tours, methods and weed management plan workshops.
Native Seed Cost Share Program continues
HPP weed treatment cost share program ends after 3 years
In anticipation of final founding Council members terms ending in 2008, Coop develops transition strategy and long term plan with 3 scenarios
Engaged new Larimer County staff person-Tim D'Amato and started conversation about long term solutions of expanded education and outreach efforts and expansion of Weed District to include all of Larimer County
Expand and reinvigorate Committees-engaging outgoing Council members
Membership: 39 paid members which includes 33 individual members, 2 associations (Fox Acres Community Services, Landowner Assoc. for Phantom Canyon Ranches, Meadowbrook Ranch Road Assoc.), and 4 agency/organizations.
Completed new database linked to spatial digital map.
Second **Wacky Weeders**, a ½ day noxious weed removal project on USFS land around Dowdy Lake at Red feather Lakes; partnership between NFWC, USFS and TNC, and private landowners*

2008

*All founding Council members end their terms at February 2008 annual meeting
New Council members elected at Annual meeting Feb 13th
Start work in partnership with Larimer County to expand weed district*